

kitchen from the Tiburon fire engine company No. 12. The note said that the firefighters had fought to save the house from the surrounding flames and that they had been successful, but they wanted to thank the homeowner because afterwards they had come in and had soda and crackers. As the resident said, when he returned home, no amount of soda and crackers will ever be enough to repay these firefighters for their heroic actions. In fact, he said that he was the one that should be thanking the firefighters, not the other way around.

I assure you, Mr. Speaker, similar stories of firefighters going beyond their call of duty to assist victims and protect homes and the park can be found throughout West Marin.

Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate National Fire Prevention Week, let us salute our Nation's firefighters. Like the constituent that I told you about, we are all forever indebted to these courageous men and women, the true heroes of the United States of America.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, let me first thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. WELDON] for organizing this special order in recognition of Fire Prevention Week.

I would also like to commend the chairman of the bipartisan Fire Caucus, Mr. BOEHLERT, for his hard work and commitment to the fire service. The over 340 Members of this body who are in the Fire Caucus, are well served by such an able and effective chairman.

Mr. Speaker, most Americans recognize that the United States has the finest fire protection in the world.

Clearly, we have made valiant strides in fire prevention and safety since the very sobering report, *America Burning*, in 1973.

Firefighter deaths in the line of duty, as well as civilian fatalities, are on the decline.

Organizations such as the National Fire Protection Association who are sponsoring Fire Prevention Week have been integral in fire education and the promotion of safety and prevention.

The U.S. Fire Administration, located in my home State of Maryland, provides the backbone of our Nation's fire safety and protection services.

This administration also trains hundreds of firefighters each year and provides the very best in fire data and information.

Mr. Speaker, although we have seen these dramatic improvements in the number of fire-related fatalities in the last 20 years, the United States still lags behind many other industrialized nations in fire safety.

Last year, 100 of our very best firefighters were killed in the line of duty. Additionally, over 4,000 civilians were killed as a result of structural, vehicle, and outdoor fires.

While we can celebrate our accomplishments in fire prevention and safety over the two decades, we must take very seriously the challenge that lies ahead.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this challenge is twofold.

First, we must recognize the tremendous public service provided by America's firefighters.

Today, there are just over one million firefighters operating out of more than 30,000 departments nationwide.

Their dedication and service allow all Americans to rest a little easier at night and feel confident that if, in the unfortunate event that there is a fire, their lives and property will be protected by an able and dedicated fire service.

These firefighters should be all of our heroes as they work exhausting shifts and take on the greatest physical and mental challenges.

I have introduced a bill along with the chairman of the Fire Caucus, Mr. BOEHLERT, which would seek to correct one of the greatest inequities in the Federal Government pay system.

Every day over 10,000 Federal firefighters around the country put their lives on the line to protect the lives and property of the American people. Under the present pay system, Federal firefighters work over 25 percent more hours per week, yet earn nearly 44 percent less per hour than the average municipal firefighter.

Simply put, I have introduced this legislation to correct this pay inequity by bringing Federal firefighters under the same pay system as all Federal employees. Although the bill will not fully close the gap, it will compensate Federal firefighters at a level closer to that of municipal firefighters.

Where we can, we must also continue to ensure that all fire fighters, volunteer, municipal, and Federal receive all of the benefits and rights that can and should be afforded to them so that we can continue to encourage the very best in America to join the firefighter ranks.

Mr. Speaker, throughout the country, whenever there is an emergency, a fire, or other type of disaster, firefighters are the first to respond. They don't simply put out fires. They provide moral support and are active and responsible members of our communities.

I rise with great admiration and appreciation for the service and dedication of firefighters throughout the United States.

Second and equally important, she must work toward a day when all Americans are educated about fire prevention and specific steps people can take to reduce fire hazards in the home and work place. The role of the U.S. Fire Administration along with States and local fire officials is crucial to this effort.

To address this issue, I have introduced a bill, H.R. 771, with Congressmen WELDON and BOEHLERT, which seeks to create a grant program, administered by the USFA, which would provide moneys to individual States and localities for the purposes of fire education and prevention.

Given that each State has different fire and safety issues and concerns, this bill will allow the USFA to focus its resources appropriately on each of the different needs.

Mr. Speaker, Let me be clear. I do not believe that the Fire Safety and Education Act of 1995 provides the entire answer to our fire prevention concerns. There must be a partnership be-

tween fire departments and organizations and the citizens of each community throughout America. What we can do is help to empower the American people to learn how to prevent fires from occurring and take greater responsibility for their own safety.

Teamwork is the key to continuing our efforts in reducing fire-related fatalities and damages.

This week is an important step in focusing attention on the successes of the past 20 years, but also the work that lies ahead. Whether through legislation on the Federal or State level, through increased training of our firefighters, and through education initiatives on the local levels, we must continue to focus on fire protection and safety.

Fire Prevention Week is a very good opportunity to focus on the fire service and these issues and I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania for arranging for this special order.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. TEJEDA (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT), for today and the balance of the week, on account of illness.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. GEJDENSON) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. SKAGGS, for 5 minutes, today
Ms. JACKSON-LEE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. WISE, for 5 minutes, today.
Ms. DELAURO, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. GEJDENSON, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. BEVILL, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. DUNCAN) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. HANSEN, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. JONES, for 5 minutes, on October 12.

Mr. KIM, for 5 minutes each day, today and on October 12.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana, for 5 minutes each day, on October 12 and 13.

Mr. BRYANT of Tennessee, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. SMITH of Washington, for 5 minutes, on October 12.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan, for 5 minutes each day, on October 12 and 13.

Mr. MCINNIS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SHAYS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. FRANKS of Connecticut, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. RAMSTAD, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DUNCAN, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Member (at his own request) and to include extraneous matter:)